



A political study trip to the Netherlands to stimulate diffusion of Dutch bicycle policies in Sweden?

The knowledge and needs of Swedish municipalities about Dutch bicycle policies and their interest in a political study trip



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Preface

One year of studying in another country, one year in Sweden. It was a year of luck and bad luck, of dark and light and of learning a new language. I chose to do my master in Environmental Communication and Management. A choice I do not regret.

After some doubts I decided to write about bicycle policies in Sweden. A subject that might sound strange to many but therefore also makes it interesting. As I am from Amsterdam and almost naturally a very big supporter of biking, since cycling is environmentally friendly, since I prefer to have a practical perspective on science and above all, because I love it (!) I decided to choose this subject. I approached the Swedish organization *Cykelfrämjandet*. Coincidentally they were working on a project that I could integrate into this study.

Writing a high-quality thesis takes time. In just two months I tried to properly carry out research, which was a difficult task. Unfortunately (and ironically) I fell off my bike, with an injured knee as a result, in the middle of this process. Therefore, as I was not so mobile anymore and had to make a lot of visits to the vårdcentral, it was hard to stay motivated from time to time. However, I managed not to lose my love for cycling and, despite some doubts about my subject that emerged so now and then, I am satisfied with the result.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Lars Hallgren and all the respondents who participated in this study. Further I would like to thank all my new and inspiring friends I met in Sweden the last year. It was an experience not to forget!

Abstract

Purpose: This thesis investigates if Swedish municipalities are interested to participate in a political study trip to the Netherlands with the goal to educate Swedish municipalities on Dutch bicycle policies. Furthermore it will explore what participants would expect during a political study trip. To educate Swedish municipalities there has to be a spread (diffusion) of Dutch bicycle innovations. Therefore the presence of the conditions for diffusion of innovation will be studied. Additionally, a political study trip to The Netherlands for Swedish municipalities will be developed. This study will be partly conducted for *Cykelfrämjandet*, an organisation that promotes cycling in Sweden.

Methodologies: Next to theoretical research, a qualitative study has been carried out to meet the objectives of the research. Seven semi-structured face-to-face interviews with politicians and civil servants in four Swedish municipalities were conducted.

Findings: In general, respondents are interested in a political study trip to the Netherlands. Moreover, they think it will be useful. Several elements that positively influence the process of diffusion are present. However, according to the respondents, it will be difficult for Swedish municipalities to actually implement new bicycle policies although they (possibly) would want to. The expectation of a study trip differs among the respondents. Further research is needed in order to explore if more Swedish municipalities would be interested in a study trip and if positive conditions for diffusion will lead to policy diffusion and maybe even the implementation of new policies.

Implications: This study connects present literature with bicycle policies on the municipal level. Further it presents a model with elements that can influence the adoption of innovation. Finally it provides an advice for a three-day political study trip for Swedish municipalities to the Netherlands.

Key words: Bicycle policies, policy diffusion, diffusion of innovation, change methods

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1. Introduction

1.1 Motives for research

1.1.1 Benefits of cycling

Bicycling plays an important role in countries like the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark (Rietveld & Daniel, 2004). The bicycle is an environmental friendly and cheap way of transportation, it can bring you from door to door, it makes you independent and over short distances it is the fastest way of transportation (Shimano/I-CE, 2006). Further is cycling efficient and sustainable (Page, 2005). Moreover, it is not dangerous for other road users and it is healthy. Car drivers are unhealthier than cyclists because they exhaust fumes (Page, 2005).

The Netherlands already has decades of experience with policies to encourage cycling and the levels of cycling are high in all social groups (Pucher & Buehler, 2007). The Swedish organisation to promote cycling (*Cykelfämjandet*) wants to improve cycling in the Swedish transport system. To achieve this they want to diffuse innovations from bicycle policies in countries as the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany among Swedish municipalities through a political study trip to the Netherlands (Cykelfrämjandet, 2011). Therefore, they want to know if there is an interest in this kind of study trip. A study trip would not be effective if there would not be a spread (diffusion) of policies. Therefore, the conditions for policy diffusion have to be present.

1.1.2 Bicycling and the environment

In contrast with cars, cycling and walking are the most climate neutral ways of transportation. Additionally, cycling is sustainable. Cycling does not involve any commodities and it is a very clean way of transportation since it has a very low energy consumption (Lumsdon & Tolley, 2001; Nijland, Onrust & van Wee, 2007). Motorized vehicles are the main cause of air pollution in almost all urbanised areas. A country that has been seen as a role model for sustainable development is the Netherlands. There, the big demand for transportation among citizens can be mitigated without increasing the congestion and pollution. Furthermore, in the Netherlands the number of people killed on the roads is five times lower than the number of deaths caused by air pollution (I-ce/Habitat/VNG, 2000). In Europe motorized transport is the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. 40% of all CO₂ emissions are caused by road transport. If more journeys would change from motorized to non-motorized it is possible to reduce emissions (Submission from Sustrans, 2007).

Local authorities, like municipalities, are responsible for activities that promote the state of the environment for example the emission of greenhouse gasses (Kok et al., 2002). Sweden is a country with relative powerful municipalities and the environment is a key point on the agenda (Kok et al., 2002). However the percentage of trips by bicycle are lower than in the Netherlands (Lumsdon & Tolley, 2001; Rietveld & Daniel, 2004). Therefore it is important that the bicycle as a mean of transportation should be promoted and that municipalities in Sweden ought to try to adjust their policies to increase bicycle usage

1.2 Relevance of the research

1.2.1 Scientific relevance

There is a wide range of theory available on the conditions of diffusion of innovations and on policy diffusion (Knill, 2005). However, this theory is never related to bicycle policies on the municipal level. Moreover, in research there is not much attention for bicycles in general (Nijland, Onrust & van Wee, 2007). Research on the possible interest in a political study trip to stimulate the diffusions of Dutch bicycling policies in Swedish municipalities is scientifically relevant because there is no literature available on how bicycle policies diffuse between countries. Furthermore, this study can be a starting point for future research on this subject, as this study does not investigate if diffusion actually will take place.

1.2.2 Practical relevance

Besides the scientific relevance of this study it also contributes to practical and organizational issues. As in research, also in policies not enough attention goes out to cycling (Nijland, Onrust & van Wee, 2007). Hence this research pays attention to bicycle policies in Sweden and The Netherlands. Moreover, by conducting this research both *Cykelfrämjandet* and Swedish municipalities will receive useful information. At the moment *Cykelfrämjandet* is lacking knowledge on the information Swedish municipalities have about Dutch bicycle policies, if they want to receive information and how they want to receive this (Cykelfrämjandet, 2011). Therefore, the results of this research can help *Cykelfrämjandet* design a suitable political study trip. Further the concept of cycling is a hot topic among Swedish municipalities like Stockholm. The developed political study trip to The Netherlands concerning bicycle policies that this study will provide will offer Swedish municipalities a change to enhance their knowledge.

1.3 Problem formulation and research question

1.3.1 *Cykelfrämjandet*

Cykelfrämjandet is an organisation that promotes cycling in Sweden. Their goal is to make Sweden a real cycle nation “*verklig cykelnation*” (Cykelfrämjandet, 2011). They work on a local and national level in order to promote cycling for a better environment, health and safe traffic throughout the country. They cooperate with authorities and planners and acting as a referral body. Further they annually perform an analysis of cycle paths and they provide information on the cyclists’ rights and obligations. Besides this they are also actively involved in cycle tourism (Cykelfrämjandet, 2011).

1.3.2 Swedish municipalities

In Sweden there are 290 municipalities that are divided over 21 counties. They are responsible for various important local services like city planning (Local authorities, 2010). Swedish municipalities have the freedom to make their own decisions. They believe that these decisions must be based on up-to-date information, which is monitored by the Ministry of Finance (Local authorities, 2010). Hence, in order to make decisions about cycling policies, firstly, relevant information has to be collected. In this study, when using the notation *Swedish municipalities*, the researcher refers to the politicians and the civil servants within the Swedish

municipalities who were involved in this research. The same applies to (municipalities in) *the Netherlands*.

1.3.3 A political study trip to the Netherlands to educate Swedish municipalities

Next to Germany and Denmark, the Netherlands is one of the most successful countries in the promotion of cycling (Pucher & Buehler, 2007). In the Netherlands 30% of all the trips are by bicycle. In Sweden this percentage is 10 (Lumsdon & Tolley, 2001; Rietveld & Daniel, 2004).

Cykelfrämjandet assumes that municipalities in Sweden do not possess much information concerning bicycle policies and the promotion of cycling in the Netherlands. Moreover, *Cykelfrämjandets* organizational goal is to make a cycle nation out of Sweden. Therefore, they believe it will be useful to organize a political study trip for Swedish municipalities to the Netherlands to educate Swedish civil servants and politicians about Dutch bicycle policies (Cykelfrämjandet, 2011). This plan arose after the deputy mayor of Stockholm approached *Cykelfrämjandet*. He wanted to go on a political study trip to the Netherlands and asked the organization for help. *Cykelfrämjandet* already organises leisure trips but since they want to focus more on politics they also want to work with bicycle policies. The contact with the deputy mayor was a good motive to start thinking about organising a political study trip for Swedish municipalities to the Netherlands. *Cykelfrämjandet* believes it is a good way to educate municipalities. Moreover, it can be an income source for them to organise this.

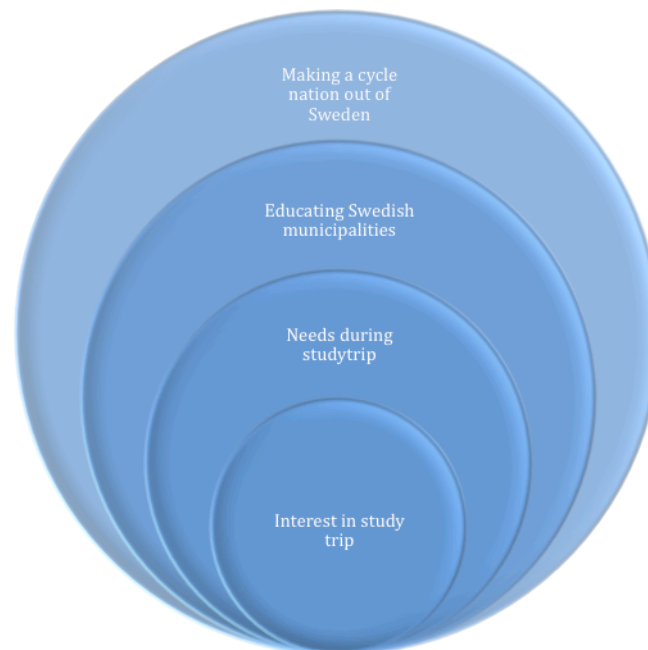


Figure 1: Motives of *Cykelfrämjandet*

Cykelfrämjandet does not know how far Swedish municipalities know about Dutch bicycle policies and if they would like to know more. Further, *Cykelfrämjandet* assumes the municipalities do not know what they know but that they might have a feeling about what they should know. Hence there is a problem for *Cykelfrämjandet*. They want to be more active in the political field but do not exactly know what the needs of municipalities are. However there also is a problem for Swedish

municipalities, the municipality of Stockholm for example, would like to gain more knowledge about Dutch bicycle policies but also they do not precisely know how.

As the overall goal of *Cykelfrämjandet* is to make a cycle nation out of Sweden the spread (from now on: diffusion) of Dutch policies and/or cycle innovations have to take place (Cykelfrämjandet, 2011). According to *Cykelfrämjandet* a political study trip can be a good opportunity to educate Swedish municipalities. To create an effective study trip the conditions of policy diffusion have to be present. To uncover if more Swedish municipalities are in need of getting educated on Dutch cycle policies, if they would consider participating in a political study trip (and how to achieve this) to the Netherlands and if the conditions for policy diffusion are present the following two research questions have been developed:

Research question 1:

What are the conditions for diffusion of innovations and diffusion of Dutch cycle policies?

Research question 2:

How do Swedish politicians and civil servants think about the possibilities of a political study trip and how should the content of this trip look like?

1.4 Structure of research

This thesis will be a combination of theory, empirical research and a practical part where a study trip for Swedish municipalities will be developed. To establish the findings, the following procedure will be applied. After this introduction the focus will be on the research background. Theory on diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion will be discussed. In the following chapter the methodology is being described. The results will be described and discussed in chapter four. Subsequently the findings of the empirical research will be presented in chapter five. Moreover, this chapter will answer the research questions. Lastly, there will be attention for the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

2. Research background

2.1 Bicycle policies

As a result of the oil crisis in 1975 the Netherlands was the first country that implemented a national bicycle policy (Rietveld & Daniel, 2004). In the late 1970s bicycle policies became important at the municipal level in the Netherlands. Most of the bicycle policies in Europe are local (Nijland, Onrust & Van Wee, 2007). Local policies can consist out of push and pull measures. Push measures can make car usage less attractive, for example with higher costs for parking, less parking space in city centres or road pricing. Pull factors on the other hand can increase bike usage and focus more on the improvement of the cycling infrastructure, more parking spaces for bikes, the prevention of theft and decrease of the waiting time at traffic lights (Nijland, Onrust & Van Wee, 2007).

Bicycle policies differ from country to country and also between municipalities in the same country there are large differences between policies (Rietveld & Daniel, 2004). According to Lumsdon & Tolley (2001) the potentials for biking depend on the local strategies municipalities apply. Facilities like biking tracks are an example of this. Political choices that were made in the '50s and '60s are still visible nowadays and when special policies are being revised, changes only take place gradually (Cycling in the Netherlands, 2009). According to Nijland, Onrust & van Wee (2007) there are factors of bike usage that can be influenced by policies. Rietveld & Daniel (2004) have shown that municipal bicycle policies have a positive influence on bicycle usage. The following model shows the factors that explain bicycle use. It shows the policy influences on bicycle usage, both in the generalized costs of for example the car and the generalized costs of bicycling. Further it points out that individual features and socio-cultural factors, like the image one has of cycling, also have an influence on bicycle use.

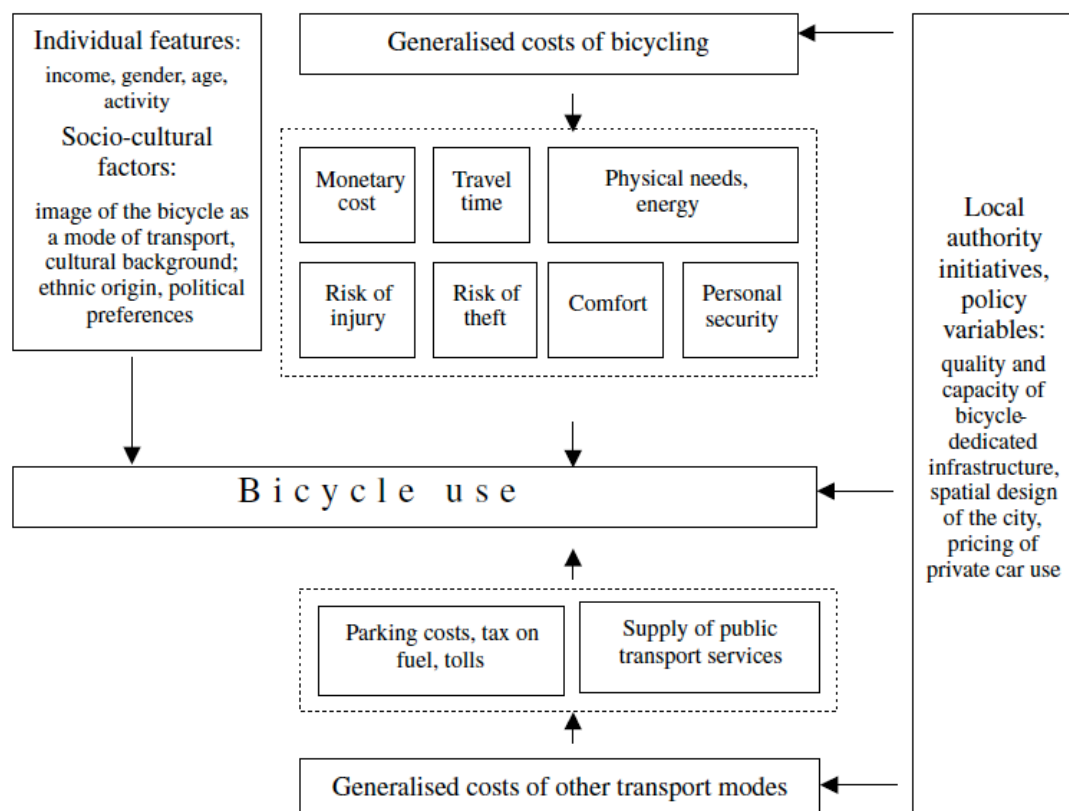


Figure 2: General framework of factors explaining bicycle use. (Rietveld & Daniel, 2005)

2.2 Diffusion of innovation

According to Rogers (1995) diffusion is:

“the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 6)

The communicated message of the diffusion has to contain new ideas. An idea, practice or object is an innovation if it is new for the one who adopts it. This does not mean that the knowledge was not already there but one has to develop a positive or negative attitude towards it (Rogers, 1995).

The diffusion process consists out of several elements. First of all there has to be an innovation, second there has to be a party that already has experience with this innovation and there has to be a party that has no experience with this innovation yet. Lastly there has to be a channel to communicate between the two involved parties (Rogers, 1995). According to Rogers (1995) it is more effective to have communication between parties who are at the same level, for example parties who have a homogeneous function in their professional life. Hence, it can be problematic when two parties are heterogenic and do not understand each other because of, for example, the knowledge barrier between them or the different languages they speak.



Figure 3: Elements that together form the diffusion process

2.3.1 Characteristics of innovation

Innovations have several characteristics. These characteristics can determine the extent to which an innovation will be adopted (Rogers, 1995). The first character is relative advantage (Rogers, 1995). An innovation has to be seen as better than the already existing idea. If the perceived relative advantage of an innovation is big the innovation will be adopted more rapidly. The second characteristic, compatibility, is the extent to which an innovation is seen as being in line with the values, knowledge and needs of potential adopters. An innovation will be adopted less fast if an idea is incompatible with the norms and values of a social system (Rogers, 1995). The third characteristic is the complexity of an innovation (Rogers, 1995). To adopt an innovation it has to be understandable and not too difficult to use. The next characteristic, trialability, implies that if an innovation can be tried before adopting the probability that the innovation will be adopted is much bigger (Rogers, 1995). The last character, observability, implies that the results of an innovation have to be observable for others to increase the likelihood of adapting it (Rogers, 1995).

Attribute	Key Question
Relative advantage	Is the innovation better than what was there before?
Compatibility	Does the innovation fit with the intended audience?
Complexity	Is the innovation easy to use?
Trialability	Can the innovation be tried before making a decision to adopt?
Observability	Are the results of the innovation visible and easily measurable?

Figure 4: Characteristics of innovation that affect diffusion (Glanz et al., 2008).

There can be a difference in the adoptability of innovations between municipalities (Moon & Norris, 2005). Different municipalities have different experiences with innovation. If they have positive experiences with former innovations it will be more likely that they adopt an innovation. Another factor that influences the degree of innovation adoption is the resources that are available within a municipality. Resources can be for example, financial resources, employees and knowledge. Additionally, the size of a city is a factor that influences the degree of innovation adoption. In general, large cities have more resources to adopt innovations than smaller cities (Moon & Norris, 2005).

2.3 Policy diffusion

Diffusion of innovations can occur within many different types of processes. When policy innovations spread from one municipality to the other policy diffusion takes place (Shipan & Volden, 2008). According to Knill (2005):

“policy diffusion typically refers to the processes (rather than outcomes) that might result in increasing policy similarities across countries” (p. 766)

Grossback, Nicholson-Crotty & Peterson (2004) state that the diffusion of a policy only can happen when involved parties learn from another. Moreover, governments learn about policy practices from common relationships, discussions and institutional membership but not randomly. Therefore in the diffusion process it is required that stakeholders are being informed on the choices within policies made by others (Grossback, Nicholson-Crotty & Peterson, 2004). Additionally, a municipality has to know if a policy fits into their municipality. According to Grossback, Nicholson-Crotty & Peterson (2004) different municipalities can have different ideologies. If municipalities have the same ideology they would be more likely to take over their policies because it goes along with their principles.

The driving force behind policy diffusion can come from different actors. Examples of this are from pressure groups or the political majority that changes after elections. (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Learning is an effective mechanism of policy diffusion. If policy makers observe politics of policy adoption they can learn from other government's experiences. When a problem arises policy makers can search for

solution that works elsewhere. Furthermore, it is not possible to learn about a policy that not yet has been implemented (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Additionally, Shipan & Volden (2008) state that if a policy is successful somewhere else it is more likely that others will adopt it.

2.4 Developing a political study trip to the Netherlands

Educating Swedish municipalities through a political study trip requires planning and organization for *Cykelfrämjandet*. To achieve *Cykelfrämjandets* organizational goal a certain change within the political system of Swedish municipalities has to take place. A political study trip could be a stimulant to create this change.

Many different methods for change exist (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007). In order to design an educational study trip about bicycle policies it is important to think of several characteristics that will determine the character of the event. The following table will give an overview of the characteristics that should be taken into account when designing the program of a study trip:

Character	Description
Purpose	What is the aim and focus of a study trip? What do we want to accomplish?
Type of system	What kind of people come together?
Event size	What size should the event have considering space, time and costs?
Duration	What should the duration of a study trip be?
Cycle	Should a study trip be held once, periodically or continuously?
Special resource needs	Technology requirements, facilitator, space, clean air etc.

Table 1: Characteristics that determine an event

Further, when selecting a method one has to think about the financial aspects. Firstly, the costs of the event have to be taken into consideration. The costs can vary widely depending on the method. However, according to Holman, Devane & Cady (2007) costs are mostly determined by the organization. The second aspect is the benefits. One has to consider what the benefits of a method are in relation to the costs of carrying out the method. Lastly, but not less important, are the recourses available. It might not be the biggest financial expenses but even small facets like LCD projectors can make a meeting more successful.

If there is a good formulated purpose, possible stakeholders are more willing to participate. Therefore organizers should remember that this is an important aspect to attract participants. The next question is who needs to be involved. As the trip will be political the target group will be organizational. People that should be involved are those who can influence and affect change (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007). Further, conversations have to be meaningful for the participant. Lastly, the invitation is the first communication towards the possible participants. Consequently it has to attract people and show them that what they have to offer is important. Moreover, it should

create curiosity and excitement (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007).

3. Method

3.1 Introduction

In the subsequent section the methods for research will be discussed. Starting with the design of the research followed by the interview method, the selection of respondents and lastly a discussion of how the data are being selected.

3.2 Research design

To answer the research question this thesis contains a theoretical part and an empirical part. In the theoretical part existing literature on bicycle policies, the diffusion of innovation, policy diffusion and methods for change will be briefly discussed. Literature for the theory was selected through the digital library of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Google Scholar. The following keywords were used: *fiets, fietsbeleid, milieu, cycle, bicycle, policy, urban, the Netherlands, Sweden, benefits, diffusion, innovation and municipality/es*. With these words has been searched in different combinations.

After the theoretical analysis, empirical research has been conducted. As this study has an open ended research question and tries to investigate new insights into the phenomenon of conditions for diffusion of innovation and diffusion of bicycle policies and more in-depth information that is hard to collect with quantitative research it is based on explorative qualitative fieldwork (Hoepfl, 2007; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). This is an inductive, flexible and open method of research where situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviour of civil servants and politicians are being described in detail (Patton, 1990; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). It is inductive because it starts with specific observations that will be the base of more general patterns (Patton, 1990). The disadvantages of this type of research are that there will always be a degree of subjectivity, it is time consuming, it is hard to reproduce and it is often expensive (Straus & Corbin, 1998). However this type of research has been chosen because it tries to explore the conditions of specific phenomena and it can give details of complex phenomena that are hard to discover with quantitative research (Straus & Corbin, 1998). Moreover, the researcher can observe and understand the research objects in their own words (Patton, 1990).

3.3 Qualitative interview

Because the researcher studies selected issues in detail, depth and openness, a qualitative research method has been chosen (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). In contrast to quantitative interview techniques as questionnaires, in depth interviews can acquire quality information. Through a qualitative interview the researcher can get in touch with stakeholders and their feelings and experiences on the subject of this study (Westers & Peters, 2004). The research has been carried out through personal semi-structured interviews. With this type of interview the researcher uses a topic list with a preference of the order of the questions (Wester &

Peters, 2004). On this topic list themes as knowledge about cycle policies in Swedish municipalities, knowledge about Dutch cycle policies, the interest in a study trip and the perceived possibilities for policy diffusion are included. The topics are predetermined but the method for questioning is open (Patton, 1990). This gives the researcher the possibility and freedom to respond to the answers given by the interviewee (Hoepfl, 2007; Patton, 1990).

3.4 Respondent selection

The selection of respondents was based on *purposeful sampling*. This type of sampling selects cases that can be studied in-depth and that contain a lot of information (Hoepfl, 2007). Five municipalities (Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö, Uppsala and Knivsta) in Sweden were approached to participate. They were selected through maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990). This means that a wide range of extremes was selected (Patton, 1990). Stockholm is a big urban city and is with 837.031 inhabitants the biggest municipality in Sweden. Malmö and Uppsala, with respectively 258.020 and 195.373 inhabitants are cities that are significantly smaller than Stockholm. Knivsta has 13.954 inhabitants and is a relatively small town. Additionally, the respondents within the municipalities had to meet specific criteria. They either had to be politicians or civil servants in one of the municipalities and working with bicycle policy or promotion of cycling.

Respondents were approached by e-mail. This e-mail contained an explanation of the research and a request to collaborate. Some respondents were approached by telephone conversations. Eventually, four municipalities were included. Within the selected municipalities at least one person was interviewed. In total seven interviews were conducted. All the interviews were individual except one. This was because of the availability of the respondent. Therefore has been chosen to do one joint interview.

Respondent	Function	Municipality
Interviewee 1	Traffic Planner	Stockholm
Interviewee 2	Politician Green Party (responsible for traffic, infrastructure & city planning)	Stockholm
Interviewee 3	Politician Central Partiet, Cycle plan developer	Uppsala
Interviewee 4	Traffic planner	Malmö
Interviewee 5	Technical controller	Knivsta
Interviewee 6	Road manager	Knivsta
Interviewee 7	Chairman/political responsible for infrastructure	Knivsta

Table 2: List of interviews

3.5 Data analysis

The conducted face-to-face interviews were in a time range of 45 till 75 minutes. After agreement with the respondents, all interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. The advantage of a voice recorder is that the researcher can focus on the

interview and that all the attention goes to the interviewee. Additionally, it is trust worthier than written notes (Hoepfl, 2007).

In order to analyse the collected data, a certain amount of creativity is needed. Raw data have to be arranged into coherent categories. The data has to be investigated and this interpretation has to be communicated to the reader (Hoepfl, 2007). The process of analyzing the data depends on the skills of the researcher. Consequently, this is the weakness and the strength of qualitative research (Patton, 1990). In this study the researcher started with *open coding*. During this process observed data was broken down, examined, compared, conceptualized and categorized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Perceptions were labelled based on the interview questions. Hereby different points of view became visible and the data were categorized into codes (see appendices). After this process the researcher started with *axial coding* where categories were linked. The conditions, context, strategies and consequences were related to a category. After identification and determination, the categories were linked and the interpretation of the data was assigned to the codes (in keywords). In this phase new understanding of the phenomenon was acquired and a conceptual model was built. This has been done in order to create the “*big picture*” (Hoepfl, 2007, p. 55). Selective coding was the final part of the data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The core categories, bicycle policies, the interest and expectations for a political study trip and the conditions for diffusion, had been selected and were connected to the other categories. In this final phase the findings were translated and the conceptual model made by the researcher was shaped into a descriptive narrative for the reader (Hoepfl, 2007).

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

In this part of the study the results will be discussed. To give a clear overview of the situation within Swedish municipalities, the first part will start with a description of the view on cycling in Sweden and in how far bicycle policies are being applied in Sweden. This part will be followed by a discussion of the knowledge Swedish municipalities already have about cycle policies in the Netherlands. Finally the interest and needs of a study trip to the Netherlands and the conditions of diffusion of innovation are being discussed. Within the discussion of the main findings the content of a possible political study trip will be discussed.

4.2 The Swedish society and their view on cycling

Something that has been brought up frequently by the respondents is that what is missing in Sweden is the way people look at cycling. Respondents point out that in Sweden, cycling is more seen as a mean for recreation rather than a form of transportation. Therefore, one respondent state that the bicycle has to be acknowledged more as a tool that can bring one from A to B. Furthermore, another respondent points out that many people prefer to take the car because they have children and are in a hurry in the morning. Moreover, according to this respondent, most families have enough money to own a car and people are used to go by car.

“The biggest thing that is missing is the mental approach”
(Interviewee 1, traffic planner)

A traffic planner states that the cause of this point of view on cycling lies in history. In contrary to Sweden, it was normal to cycle in the Netherlands fifty years ago. After the invention of the car Sweden put more focus on the car and infrastructure for cyclist was taken away. Interviewee 1 believes that changing this attitude towards the bicycle is difficult. Prior of changing people’s mentality lays a whole process.

4.3 Interpretations on Swedish bicycle policies

Municipalities included in this study all have different bicycle policies. The traffic planner for Stockholm municipality for example, states that he only works with bicycle policies while in Uppsala the traffic planner works on the planning the whole transportation system. However, the ambition to develop a separate bicycle policy in Uppsala is present. According to the traffic planner in Malmö, bicycle policies get a lot of attention while the civil servants in Knivsta state that there is a cycle plan but it is part of the overall traffic plan. Interviewee 1 about bicycle policies:

“It should be a law that every municipality should have a cycle policy”
(Interviewee 1, traffic planner)

“We have a lot of ambitions described in our översiktsplan (big picture plan) of how to develop Uppsala as a community. Within this plan there are a lot of perspectives regarding bicycling”
(Interviewee 3, politician)

All municipalities consider it as important to have a bicycle policy. The main reasons mentioned for this are the environmental benefits and the health benefits. However, according to one respondent, within the bicycle policy, also safety should be an important concern, especially for children.

“The environment and peoples’ health are the reasons why cycling is important”
(Interviewee 6, politician)

According to most of the respondents several aspects concerning cycling form problems within municipalities. In municipalities like Stockholm and Uppsala there are problems with the infrastructure. There is not much space to build new cycle lanes and often cycle lanes suddenly stop which cyclists do not appreciate. Therefore, according to one respondent, it is important that every time when a new living area will be created, the cycle infrastructure and the road signs have to be taken into account. This is not always the case and that has to change. A politician in Knivsta states that inhabitants are concerned about the safety because there are a lot of families with children. Furthermore people prefer to have separate cycle roads instead of sharing the road with cars. Additionally, in Uppsala and Stockholm, there are complaints about the lack of maintenance of infrastructure and the grit that is being used during wintertime but stays on the roads after the snow has disappeared.

Another observation of several respondents is that the majority of the ruling politics put cycling on a low position on the political agenda. One respondent states that this

might be because they are more interested in other cases than the integration of cycling and the implementation of new policies concerning cycling. Several respondents point out that they are trying to change the policy on cycling but at the same time they state that it is very hard to change current situations in their municipality and implement new policies. A reason given for this is that the bodies that are most interested in the improvement of cycling have not enough power to implement new ideas. The priority cycling gets on the political agenda depends on the majority in the municipal politics. At the moment politicians in Stockholm are saying bicycle policies are getting more importance and they want to make a new plan. Hence the old policy is going to be reviewed. However, according to interviewee 1, although there will be changes the most will stay the same.

“There has been other focuses for the political parties that have the power”
(Interviewee 2, politician)

4.4 Knowledge about Dutch policies differs

The majority of the respondents see the bicycle policies in the Netherlands as more innovative than Swedish policies even when they do not know much about it. Most of the respondents have heard that the policies in the Netherlands are better but they do not know exactly why. However, many respondents state that the Netherlands is a very dense country, which makes them find other solutions than countries that are not so dense. Although not all of the respondents know if the Netherlands is innovative in bicycle policies they are interested in the fact that the bicycle gets more priority than cars because in most Swedish municipalities cars, cyclists and pedestrians are at the same level.

“I am representing a party that loves cars but we are also very environmentally focused and we need to get our people to use the bicycle instead of cars”
(Interviewee 3, politician)

For those respondents who do not know much about Dutch bicycle policies it is hard to say if Dutch bicycle policies will fit into the policy of their municipality. Nevertheless, most of the respondents assume they do. Swedish municipalities think they could learn from the Netherlands and that they do know better how to design and implement bicycle policies. Some respondents state that they are more innovative in the Netherlands than in Sweden. Because cycling is so established in the Netherlands Swedish municipalities have a high amount of trust in the knowledge of the Dutch. Dutch policies will be understandable but it has to be explained in a simplified way. Meaning that information has to be clear and not too complex. One respondent state that Dutch policies will be understandable but only if there is an interest in it. When participants of a study trip are not interested in the subject it will be less likely they will understand what will be said because they might not pay enough attention to it. Respondents who go there without motivation will not understand so much. Although trust in Dutch cycle policies is high, one respondent points out that not everything that others say has to be taken for granted. It has to be kept in mind that everyone sees things in a different perspective. Details in the Netherlands will be different than details in Sweden. Further, respondents do not see language as a problem.

4.5 Dutch bicycle policies in Sweden?

Respondents point out, although both are developed European countries, there is a difference between Sweden and the Netherlands. According to most of the respondents the questions Sweden deals with are different than in the Netherlands. The solutions in the Netherlands are perhaps not so easy to apply in Sweden. A possible explanation mentioned is that there is a difference in the sizes of the countries. The Netherlands is much more dense than Sweden which might be a reason that they are more forced to think more creative. This could mean that Sweden might need another type of infrastructure. Moreover, according to a traffic planner, Sweden has to defend the bike. In the Netherlands the bike is already established. Furthermore, some respondents state that currently, the difference between policies is too big. Therefore, different knowledge is needed. Sweden needs something in between. To change a policy several resources are needed. Money is the most important resource. Without money it is not possible to change anything. Also time is a crucial aspect, because there already is a build infrastructure many municipalities assume it will be hard to restructure this infrastructure because it takes too much time and money. Besides this, the majority in the City Hall has to be pro cycling. Actually taking over a policy will take years. This does not mean one cannot learn from it. It has to be adapted to Swedish situations. If good solutions can be seen than the driving force is to implement them, also if resources are only available on a small scale. The good parts can be taken over.

“If they can do it, we can do it”
(Interviewee 2, politician)

“You can always learn from others”
(Interviewee 3, politician)

“It is a long process of planning that takes several years, so that might be a bit hard to influence”
(Interviewee 5, technical controller)

A traffic planner states that an example of a barrier for developing bicycle policies is the fire department. They argue that they cannot reach buildings in case of fire because cycle lanes will block their space. This shows that there are different perspectives on the priority cyclists get. Therefore, all different actors within a society have to be taken into account when developing policies. Furthermore, one has to be cautious. One size does not fit all but the concept could fit. Nevertheless, if a study trip would take place, respondents expect that they can bring back home gained knowledge that can be used in their own municipalities.

“What is it that the politicians need to know more about the bicycle perspectives? That would be meaningful”
(Interviewee 3, politician)

4.6 The interest in a political study trip to the Netherlands

There is a general interest in a study trip to the Netherlands among the respondents. Because there is a difference between Dutch and Swedish municipalities, respondents state that it is very important to have a good balance and mix when conducting a

study trip. The expectations for this kind of trip is that a city with good examples should be visited and that respondents can speak to people with experience in the field. Further, participants would like to see different situations regarding bicycle policies. Remarkable is that the municipality of Stockholm is working on a their own study trip to Amsterdam and Paris. All political parties are involved and the trip will take place in June 2011.

One municipality on the other hand is not sure if they would go if a study trip would focus only on bicycle policies. As they are a small municipality cycling does not get the first priority. Hence, they state that it is interesting to exchange more information than just bicycle policies. For example information on how to prevent drugs problems.

4.6.1 The expectations of a political study trip to the Netherlands

An important question for Swedish municipalities is how to realize and implement policies. For the most municipalities the focus on what to learn is first of all on the creation infrastructure and planning.

“Is it to build new infrastructure that is more important or is it more important to work with peoples behaviour and information? And it is also important to measure how people use the bike. Sometimes we might think something but in reality there might be different needs”

(Interviewee 5, technical controller)

Further, respondents would like to learn how to make society see the bicycle as a mean of transportation and how to make policies based on a non-car perspective. Faced problems, solutions for problems, and advantages of policies are mentioned frequently and should be addressed during a study trip. Also, respondents would like to hear about policies that have the environment and health as a main ground. Additionally, respondents want to know what the priorities of politicians and traffic planners are and where they work with.

“I want to see the problem and why there was this solution”

(Interviewee 6, politician)

“Maybe it is interesting to see how it was in a municipality ten years ago when it was different and the road to where they are now. Not just a snap shot and this it what it is, but you also understand what has actually changed, what have they done and what was the outcome of it so you get the picture of how it developed”

(Interviewee 5, technical controller)

Campaigning is not the main mission in municipalities although most municipalities are interested in *Cycle to work* and *Cycle to school* campaigns. However they point out that this is far from their working field. Hence, as one respondents points out, it might not be that useful to learn about this as other organizations are working with this kind of campaigning. If the opportunity to learn about campaigning is there respondents would like to hear about examples that were successful in the Netherlands.

“I want to see good examples”
(Interview 2, politician)

All the municipalities would like to visit municipalities of the same size and characteristics so they can make good comparisons. According to most respondents small cities should not be excluded as they might have more resemblances with Swedish municipalities. Moreover respondents want to visit more than one city to see the differences between policies. There is a big interest in solutions for problems like secure cycle parking, the integration of bike lanes in car traffic and separated bike networks and push and pull factors of cycle policies. Further, municipalities that should be visited have to have advanced an innovative cycle policies. According to Interviewee 5:

“Municipalities should have similar conditions, otherwise it is easy to say that something is fantastic but if it does not apply to us we cannot learn from this because it is too different. So it is important to find a municipality that somehow resembles”
(Interviewee 5, technical controller)

Regarding the way of learning during a study trip respondents have different opinions. Several forms of gaining knowledge are being mentioned. Discussion seems to be important for all respondents. They want to have the possibility to discuss with each other. Further, one respondent states that the study trip has to be a hands-on experience. Participants have to learn how things work. Not just listening to a presentation. Respondents want to do something. An example of a form of information transfer mentioned by one respondent is a short presentation where the why, how and what are being addressed. After this participants can split up and have a workshop where cases will be discussed. Another respondent mentions that a social aspect, like a dinner, should be included. During this dinner people get to know each other better and they can discuss the cases that have been addressed during the day. Furthermore it has to be clear what the objective of the trip will be. Interviewee 3 expresses this very clear:

“I don’t go to any meetings anymore without knowing what is the objective and the agenda. I don’t have time for talking in an unstructured way. If it is a brainstorm meeting, call it a brainstorm meeting”
(Interviewee 3, politician)

Experiencing things is something that has been stated often as essential. The main reason therefore is because participants can compare a new situation with the situation at home. First respondents would like to receive new information through short presentations and afterwards they would like to see with their own eyes how it works. Cycling in small groups is an example that all respondents see as an informative activity. Meeting cyclist and talking to them can be integrated in this kind of activity. Hence the program of a study trip should consist out of a mix of activities so participants get a broad view on the situation in the Netherlands.

“It is all about the experience”
(Interviewee 1, traffic planner)

“During the days I would expect a very hands on program - This is the policy, this is why we did it, this is how it works today, these are the problems that we have today - Very hands on. Not only window dressing”
(Interviewee 3, politician)

According to the respondents it will be most efficient if they will meet colleagues with homogeneous functions. Hence politicians meet politicians and traffic planners meet traffic planners. Although according to some respondents this is not enough and should they discuss altogether (politicians *and* traffic planners) in order to understand each other's work. Respondents think it is good to have an equal mix because there is always a need for new input.

“Colleagues need to meet colleagues”
(Interviewee, 2)

One respondent mentions that businessmen are another group of people to gain knowledge from. Companies who encourage cycling at work are an example of this. In the Netherlands there are companies that provide free bicycles for employees and companies that provide facilities for employees that travel to work by bicycle (lockers, showers, inside cycle parking). Other parties that are mentioned by respondents are cyclists, cycling organizations and experts.

According to one respondent, learning new aspects of cycle policies is not only about traffic and buildings but a way of looking at society. Therefore those who should go on a study trip should be both Swedish politicians and those who work with traffic planning. Other possible suitable candidates mentioned are architects, city planners and infrastructure planners of stations (train, bus, metro) as there is often a lack of parking place for bicycles and employees of municipalities are not designing parking spaces on private properties.

Another respondent states that especially those who are making decisions, like politics, should join a study trip, as in some municipalities, traffic planners are working on the executive level and have not enough power too influence.

4.6.2 Duration and budget of a political study trip to the Netherlands

A study trip should not take too long as respondents point out as employees often are busy and have children. Hence they cannot go away for a complete week. The suggestions for durations vary. Some respondents argue it has to be at least four days in order to learn something and to really experience things without rushing where others argue that two days will be enough. A trip that would be just before the weekend is seen as positive as people have the possibility to stay over for a short holiday. Spring and autumn are mentioned as good periods of going on a trip. One respondent would like to go in September as this person is in need for gaining more knowledge now. Some argue that it will be good to organize a trip like this annually while others say this would not be effective because once you know you do not have to learn about it again as implementing cycle policies takes a long time and there will not be so many changes within a year.

For most municipalities the budget for a study trip is not a problem. One municipality has fewer resources. Furthermore, one municipality for example has the policy not to

travel by airplane. This would make a study trip to the Netherlands less likely as it will take a lot of time to travel there.

4.7 Conditions for diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion

The majority of the respondents see Dutch bicycle policies as a new practice. This confirms the assumption of *Cykelfrämjandet* (2011) that Swedish municipalities do not know much about bicycle policies in the Netherlands. Moreover, it corresponds with Rogers' (1995) theory on the process of diffusion of innovation. During a study trip new information about bicycle policies (the innovation) can be communicated. This has to be done by a party that has experience with the innovation, for example Dutch traffic planners and politicians. The party without experience about the innovation, Swedish traffic planners and politicians, will receive the information through a communication channel. The data show that short presentations, discussions and own experience are the most preferred way for transferring the information.



Figure 5: Elements that together form the diffusion process of Dutch cycle policies

Because the conditions for all the elements the diffusion process consist out of are present, it appears to be that a study trip possibly could lead to the process of diffusion of Dutch bicycle innovations. Moreover, according to Grossback, Nicholson-Crotty & Peterson (2004) a condition for the diffusion of a policy is that involved parties have to learn from another. All respondents suppose they can learn from a study trip. Hence it can be assumed that a political study trip to the Netherlands can educate participating stakeholders and that diffusion of bicycle policies could take place. However this does not automatically imply that Dutch policies will be adopted.

4.7.1 Elements that positively influence adoption

The data confirm that the characteristics that can determine the extent to which an innovation, in this case Dutch bicycle policies, will be adopted are mostly present. In general respondents assume that policies in the Netherlands are better than their existing policies. Hence there is relative advantage (Rogers, 1995). Moreover, the majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards Dutch policies. However, not all respondents are sure if they see Dutch policies as compatible as there are cultural differences between Sweden and the Netherlands, like the different mentality on cycling. On the other hand do stakeholders not see Dutch policies as complex as they assume that they will understand Dutch policies. As stakeholders point out that experiencing and seeing things themselves is very important and that they are willing to participate in such activities the conditions for triability and observability are present.

Another factor that can influence the extent to which an innovation will be adopted is

language. Respondents believe that language between Sweden and the Netherlands would not be a problem as the level of English is high in both countries. Furthermore, they would like to communicate with stakeholders that are working on the same homogeneous level as they do. According to Rogers (1995) both language and a homogeneous function are factors that will positively influence the extent of adoption

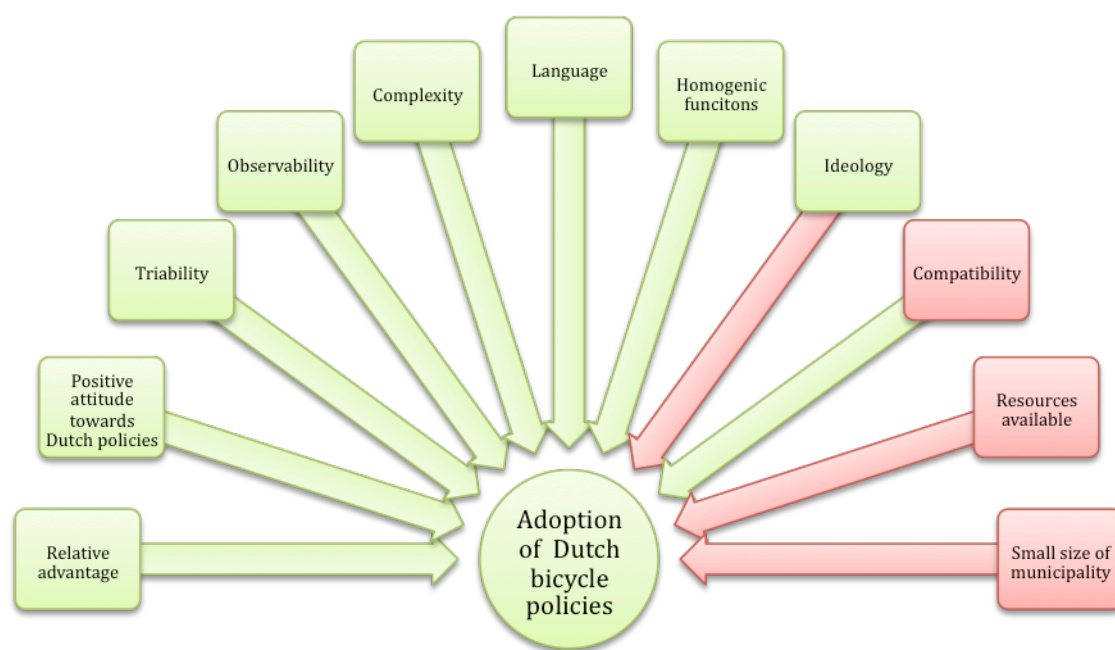


Figure 6: Elements that can influence the adoption of innovations of Dutch bicycle policies (green = positive influence, red = negative influence).

4.7.2 Elements that negatively influence adoption

Within municipalities resources for policy change are not always available. Especially money is a resource that is missing. Additionally, the size of a municipality seems to play an important role. According to Moon & Norris (2005) smaller municipalities do not have the resources to make big changes. Additionally, the results of this research show that the larger municipalities that were included in this study have more resources than the smaller ones. Further is not every municipality compatible with Dutch policies. Some municipalities point out that there is another situation in the Netherlands because they have other needs. The results of this study show that respondents assume that the attitude Swedish society has on cycling goes back in time. Cars were promoted in the '50s and many people still have a positive attitude towards the car. This connects to the General framework of factors that explain bicycle usage (Rietveld & Daniel, 2005). In Sweden the image of the bicycle is not as popular as the image of the car, which has a negative influence on bicycle usage. Moreover, as the analysis of the literature showed, political choices that were made in the '50s and '60s are still visible (Cycling in the Netherlands, 2009.) Respondents state that Sweden and the Netherlands are different countries and therefore have different mentalities. According to Grossback, Nicholson-Crotty & Peterson (2004) municipalities should have the same ideology to make it more likely to take over a policy. Therefore this difference in ideology could be a barrier for policy diffusion.

4.7.3 Policy adoption is a complex process

However, the data show a paradoxical finding. Although the data show that most of the elements that will increase the extent of adoption of innovations are present, respondents are not very convinced that diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion will lead to implementation of new policies in their municipalities after participating in a political study trip. This is due to the whole political system around implementing and changing policies. Since the political system involves many stakeholders, respondents state that it is not possible to just implement policies. Changing a policy can be a complex process. If there is not enough interest for the innovation within the majority of the politicians it is not likely there will be big changes. Furthermore, it has been found that politicians know less about bicycle policies than traffic planners. Additionally, it seems that respondents who already have experience with the Netherlands are less convinced that innovations or new policies will be adopted easily. Respondents who do not know anything about the Netherlands concerning bicycle policies are less sceptical towards the possibility of adoption. For that reason it is crucial to educate politicians (and traffic planners) more in innovative bicycle policies. Since politicians have more influence at the decision making level they should be more involved into the whole bicycle policy process.

4.8 Developing the political study trip

This section will describe a proposal for a study trip. This proposal has been offered to *Cykelfrämjandet*. The study trip is designed on the basis of the Change Handbook and the data collected during the research (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007).

Respondents are interested in a political study trip to the Netherlands. Moreover, as respondents are interesting in learning about Dutch bicycle policies this mechanism of policy diffusion (learning) (Shipan & Volden, 2008) can be applied during a political study trip. During this trip participants can observe other policies and learn from others experiences (Shipan & Volden, 2008).

Respondents that were included in this study have different professional background. A possible consequence of this is that they have different views on bicycle policies. The different sizes of municipalities might also contribute to these views and the way respondents approach bicycle policies. Big municipalities focus on different aspects than smaller municipalities. In Knivsta, respondents state it is important to pay attention to cyclists whom cycle to the train station (many inhabitants are commuters) while in Stockholm the infrastructure of cycle lanes throughout the whole city is an important focus point. This makes that municipalities, when learning from policies in other countries like the Netherlands, should have the opportunity to see different types and possibilities of policies.

As there is such a difference in the focus on cycling between municipalities it is complex to design a study trip that totally fits the needs of every possible participant. Nevertheless the results show there are many common interests and needs. It appeared to be that three days is a good duration for the trip. This will be the starting point. Spring and autumn are the preferred time periods. As *Cykelfrämjandet*, for practical reasons, will not be able to organize a trip before September two dates in October are chosen.

The following table shows the characteristics that help determine to choose a method:

Character	Study trip
Purpose	→ Educate Swedish municipalities about Dutch bicycle policies and create the conditions for: → Diffusion of innovations → Diffusion of bicycle policies → Implementation of 'Dutch' bicycle policies → Sweden as a cycle nation
Type of system	Swedish and Dutch traffic planners & politicians (non-experts and experts)
Event size	As many as interested but discussions and experiences should be shared in smaller groups. Costs are not the main concern
Duration	Three days
Cycle	Once for now, maybe annually if it appears to be effective
Special resource needs	A big room with technical facilities, sufficient tables, chairs, air etc.

Table 3: Characters that determine a study trip to the Netherlands

After taking the theory of The Change Handbook and the results of the data into consideration an advice can be given. A method recommended to carry out during a study trip is The World Café.

4.8.1 The World Café

During this method tables are positioned into café style. At every table four participants will take place and have a conversation about a matter that concerns their work (in this case bicycle policies). Participants at the tables talk about the same issue and they are being encouraged to write down main findings on a big sheet of paper. After thirty minutes participants change table and share their findings with the new members at the table. One participant stays at the same table over a total of three rounds. After three rounds there is a general discussion with all participants (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007). Participants of this method can be traffic planners and politicians from Sweden and the Netherlands from different municipalities. Hence they all have different experiences regarding bicycle policies. As respondents pointed out they want to learn about the occurring problems concerning bicycle policies the question during this World Café session will be regarding this subject.

The World Café method has been chosen because of several reasons. First, it is an inexpensive activity. Moreover, the data show that respondents would like to have the possibility to discuss with each other. In addition, as Grossback, Nicholson-Crotty & Peterson (2004) state, governments learn, among others, about policy practices through discussions. Furthermore it is a social activity where people get the change to get to know each other better then when they would be just listening to a presentation,

what also has been stated by the majority of the respondents. The subject of the conversation, problems regarding bicycle policies, has been chosen because respondents pointed out that this is an issue they want to learn about. Concluding, the World Café can encourage learning and therefore stimulate diffusion of innovation.

Other activities recommended are experiencing the policies themselves. Therefore, among the participants, small groups can be formed to cycle around in a city with advanced bicycle policies. Furthermore, short educational presentations followed by discussions and a dinner will be part of the draft.

(A proposal for the political study trip can be found in the appendices)

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The Netherlands has been very innovative in designing and implementing bicycle policies. *Cykelfrämjandet*, a Swedish organization that promotes cycling in Sweden would like to make a cycle nation out of Sweden and therefore wants to organise a political study trip to the Netherlands. The goal of this trip is to educate Swedish municipalities about bicycle policies in the Netherlands.

This aim of this study was to gather and provide the information needed for a study trip to the Netherlands and to explore if the conditions to stimulate diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion are present. The research questions used in this study are:

Research question 1:

What are the conditions for diffusion of innovations and diffusion of Dutch cycle policies?

Research question 2:

How do Swedish politicians and civil servants think about the possibilities of a political study trip and how should the content of this trip look like?

These questions have been answered through a theoretical and empirical study. The theoretical study reviewed the theory on bicycle policies, policy diffusion, diffusion of innovation and on methods for change. The empirical study tried to uncover if the conditions for diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion were present. Furthermore it investigated if there is an interest in a study trip to the Netherlands and how possible participants think the program should look like. Seven semi-structured face-to-face interviews with politicians and traffic planners within four Swedish municipalities were included.

5.2 Conclusion

The theoretical study showed that the Netherlands has innovative bicycle policies and that these policies can influence the bicycle usage within a municipality. Further, the Netherlands is more advanced than Sweden concerning knowledge and

implementation of bicycle policies. In addition, the theory showed that there are several characteristics of the diffusion of innovations and that different factors can influence the extent of diffusion processes. When educating stakeholders through a change method numerous factors have to be taken into account. Especially the purpose of a meeting should be clear and appealing for the target group.

The empirical data show that the respondents see Dutch bicycle policies as innovative. It has been observed by the researcher that there are big differences in the knowledge Swedish municipalities have on Dutch bicycle policies but, in general, respondents assume the Netherlands knows better how to design and implement bicycle policies. However, because there are differences between Sweden and the Netherlands, when taking over policies, adjustments have to be made. Moreover, resources to change policies are not always available.

Overall, Swedish municipalities are interested in a study trip to the Netherlands to learn about Dutch bicycle policies. According to the respondents, actors that should go on a study trip are traffic planners and politicians. Professionals they want to meet should have a homogeneous function. Many different points of interest regarding a study trip have been found. This is because every municipality is different if it comes to size and characteristics but also if it comes to those working within the municipality. Nevertheless, an advice for a three-day political study trip to the Netherlands has been given. This event will be a mix of experiencing, discussing and learning from experts by, among other activities, using the World Café method.

Taken as a whole, if Swedish municipalities would go on a political study trip, most of the conditions for diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion are present. However implementing innovative Dutch bicycle policies into Swedish municipalities is been seen as complex for most respondents. The reason they give for this is that changing a political system is not simple because those who have the most power to influence are not prioritising cycling. Therefore, first of all, bicycling policies should get a higher priority on the political agenda of Swedish municipalities.

5.3 Limitations

This thesis had several limitations. A first limitation is that the professions of the respondents could have influenced their responses. Almost all the included interviewees are working with bicycle policies, traffic planning or the promotion of cycling and have a positive attitude towards cycling. Furthermore, not all the respondents have the same knowledge about Dutch bicycle policies. This might have influenced their opinion about the importance of going on a study trip to the Netherlands. Hence, if new research would include more and different respondents the results might differ from this study and there might be less interest in a political study trip.

Another shortcoming is the subjectivity of the researcher. Not all researchers interpret data in the same way. If another researcher would have conducted the same research the outcomes might differ to some extent from this research. Additionally, the researcher has a very positive attitude towards cycling what also could have influenced the analysis of the data.

Further, language is a limitation. All interviews were conducted in English. Both the researcher as the interviewees are non-native English speakers. Sometimes neither the researcher nor the interviewees might have been able to find the right words. This could have limited the possibility to fully explain certain perceptions, feelings and opinions, which can cause misinterpretations. Further it has been noticed by the researcher that some interviewees were not really secure regarding their own language skills in English. This might have been a barrier to express themselves in the same way as they would have done in their mother tongue. However, according to the researcher the degree of misunderstandings during the conducted interviews was very low.

A next limitation is the time span of writing this thesis. As the period for writing the thesis is 2,5 months the researcher was very limited in conducting thorough theoretical and empirical research. Moreover it was not possible to conduct more than seven interviews. Reaching possible and suitable respondents is time consuming. Therefore the outcomes of this study would have been more extended if more municipalities had been interviewed. Now only Stockholm, Malmö, Uppsala and Knivsta are included in the research. Moreover, not all the sent e-mails with an invitation to participate were answered. Two invitations (in Uppsala and Göteborg) were rejected for the reason that the invited interview candidates had no time.

The last limitation is that the researcher did not study the advantages and content of the different Dutch bicycle policies. Therefore, within this thesis, no advice could be given regarding good bicycle cities and which cities to visit on the study trip. However, files available with this information exist.

5.4 Recommendations

Future research is recommended to analyze the perceptions of not only politicians (and traffic planners) that are pro cycling but also politicians that have more influence but less interest in bicycle policies. By interviewing politicians who do not consider bicycle policies as important, there possibly will be other results and less interest in a study trip. Additionally, when this research would be repeated, respondents should be informed about Dutch bicycle policies in advance. Hence they will all have the same level of knowledge, which would make the results easier to compare.

Another factor that could influence the outcome of the results is regarding the time span of this thesis. Due to time limits the preparation phase was very short and the number of interviews had to be reduced to seven. Consequently, it is recommended that, in future research, more time should be available to get deeper insights into existing literature to make the needed preparations (topics on the question list, approach respondents) to conduct more extensive research.

Further, it is recommended that if this research would be repeated, to consider conducting the interviews in Swedish. As some respondents were uncomfortable with speaking in English it will give a broader picture of their perceptions, feelings and opinions and it will prevent miscommunications.

This thesis does not study the effects of a study trip. Therefore it is recommended to do a follow-up study to see what the effects of this trip will be.

Two last practical recommendations are that *Cykelfrämjandet* should try to attract those to a study trip who have the power to make decisions at the policy level. Since they have more influence this group should see the importance of innovative bicycle policies. Furthermore, as not all municipalities will have the resources to go on a political study trip, it might be useful to consider using a consultant who is an expert on Dutch bicycle policies who can come to Sweden and visit Swedish municipalities. Although experiencing themselves cannot be part of the meeting it might be a solution for interested actors who do not have resources available.

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Appendices

1. Invitation for interviews potential participants – E-mail

Dear sir/madam,

My name is Nina Strategier and I come from Amsterdam, The Netherlands. I am an international master student in Environmental Communication and management at the *Sveriges landbruksuniversitet* (SLU) in Uppsala. At the moment I am writing my thesis about how Swedish municipalities can learn about cycling policies in The Netherlands. I do this partly for Cykelfrämjandet, a Swedish organization for the promotion of biking. They are planning to organize a study trip to The Netherlands for Swedish municipalities in order to learn from the Dutch cycle policies. I will design this study trip and will do research for them through interviews. They would like to know if there is any interest in this kind of study trip and what municipalities need to learn during a trip like this. With the gathered information I will also write my thesis results.

For my research I am looking for respondents who are willing to participate in an interview with me in the Kommun. This interview will take no more than one hour. I am looking for both politicians and civil servants. Preferably people who are working with traffic/planning/cycle policies or people who make decisions about this.

If this e-mail is not directed to the right department maybe you could provide me with the right contact information (e-mail address) of possible suitable candidates? It would both help me, Cykelfrämjandet and possibly your kommun a lot.

Tack så mycket,

Kind regards,

Nina Strategier

2. Interviews:

Interview	Function	Municipality
1	Traffic Planner	Stockholm
2	Politician Green Party (responsible for traffic, infrastructure & city planning)	Stockholm
3	Politician Central Partiet, Cycle plan developer	Uppsala
4	Traffic planner	Malmö

5	Technical controller	Knivsta
6	Road manager	Knivsta
7	Chairman/political responsible for infrastructure	Knivsta

3. Topic list

Topics

Introduction

- ♦ Introduction *Cykelfrämjandet*
- ♦ Introduction Nina Stategier and master thesis
- ♦ Introduction subject
- ♦ Introduction Interviewee

Cycle policies in the municipality

- ♦ Does your municipality have a bicycle policy?
- ♦ Is it important to have a bicycle policy in your municipality?
- ♦ Is there something missing in your municipality concerning bicycle policies/plans? What?
- ♦ Are cyclists in your municipality satisfied with the cycle facilities?
- ♦ Are there any problems you know of concerning cycling/cyclist or policies in your municipality? What kind of problems?

Study trip to The Netherlands

- ♦ Would you be interested in a study trip to The Netherlands in order to have a closer look on how they deal with bicycle policies? Why?
- ♦ What would you expect from a trip like this?
- ♦ Do you want to visit specific towns?
- ♦ Is it important to visit a Dutch municipality of similar size as your own?
- ♦ Is it important to visit a Dutch municipality with similar rural or urban character as your own?
- ♦ Would you like to see Dutch solutions for secure cycle parking, for integration of bike lanes in car traffic, separated bike path networks?
- ♦ Would you like to learn about Dutch experiences with “Cycle to work” or “Cycle to school” campaigns?
- ♦ Would you like to hear about cooperation involving Dutch municipalities and cycle tourism?
- ♦ Would you like to know more about Dutch experience with municipal annual cycle audits (cykelbokslut)?
- ♦ Are there people with specific functions you would like to speak with if you would be in The Netherlands?
- ♦ Do you think it would be useful to experience things yourself
- ♦ Are there any specific things/activities you would like to experience?
- ♦ Overall, how would you describe the things you need to learn during the trip?
- ♦ How many days would you prefer for the duration of a trip like this?
- ♦ Is there a budget available for a study trip like this?

- ◆ During what time of the year should a trip like this take place?
- ◆ Who should go on a study trip to The Netherlands? (what function within a municipality?)

Diffusion of innovation and policy diffusion

- ◆ Do you know Dutch bicycle policies?
- ◆ Is there a difference between bicycle policies in your municipality, other municipalities in Sweden and policies in The Netherlands?
- ◆ Do you concern information about Dutch bicycle policies as new?
- ◆ Do they know better how to design and implement bicycle policies in The Netherlands?
- ◆ Would you like to know more about Dutch bicycle policies?
- ◆ Do you trust their knowledge?
- ◆ Will their policies be understandable?
- ◆ Would language be problem if you would go there?
- ◆ Do you think you can learn something from Dutch bicycle policies?
- ◆ Would Dutch policies fit in your municipality?
- ◆ Would you try to spread knowledge you have gained into you own municipality in one way or another?
- ◆ What kind of resources do you need for this?
- ◆ What steps do you have to take to achieve this?

Completion of conversation

- ◆ Space for comments
- ◆ Ask if respondent is interested in the study

4. Coding table

Code	Theoretical concept	Results from the interviews
1	Swedish bicycle policies	Cycle policies, cycle plans, ambitious, more and more attention for cycling, cycle plans integrated in the overall traffic policy.
2	Importance of bicycle policies	Important, positive effects on the environment, positive effects on health, efficient usage of space, reducing car usage.
3	Problems concerning cycling in the municipality	Lack of infrastructure, no space for new infrastructure, cycle lanes that disappear, safety, mentality that is focused on the car, no interest in cycling, money
4	Knowledge about Dutch bicycle policies	Much knowledge, a little knowledge, no knowledge at all
5	Likelihood to learn from Dutch policies	Learning is possible, one can always learn from others

6	Trust and understanding	General trust, awareness of possible different situations, language is no problem.
7	Power of the professional	Limited power, more then one stakeholder involved, respondents have to be interested in cycling
8	Policy diffusion and implementation	Positive attitude towards policy diffusion, skeptical towards implementing new policies, complex, time consuming, long process, involvement of several stakeholders
9	Interest in study trip to NL	Interesting, money no problem, preferences for duration vary, skeptic if it will contribute
10	Expectations of study trip to NL	Examples, problems and solutions, experiencing, discussions, hands-on, presentations
11	Involved stakeholders	Traffic planners, city planners, politicians, decision makers, architects, business people.

5. Proposal political study trip

Day 1

- Introduction in ... (city in the Netherlands)
- Interactive presentation on policy development
- Discussions with politicians *and* traffic planners
- Cycling around in small groups
- Speaking to cyclists
- Dinner

Day 2

- Traveling to next city
- Presentation on policy implementation
- Discussion with politicians *and* traffic planners
- The World Café – Problems regarding cycling policies
- Cycling around in small groups

Day 3

- Interactive presentation by a company that promotes cycling for employees
- Interactive presentation by a cycling organization (Fietzersbond/Fietsberaad)
- Closing discussions and reflections all participants of the day

